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# STRATEGIC STUDIES PROJECT



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THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE  
STRATEGIC STUDIES REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Future Congressional Trends and Developments:  
Military Compensation

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DATE: February 1986

This paper provides background on the workings of Congress and the motivations which govern the actions and thereby the legislative products of Congressional members. It then develops a profile of the military with regard to the type of organizational values which exist and argues that a divergence from society has occurred. It describes the compensation issues which are of crucial concern to the military, and then considers these issues in light of future Congressional action. The paper concludes with a recommendation endorsing the adaptation of an occupational model to guide future compensation issues. It also outlines the recommended manner in which future compensation issues should be approached.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Captain Martin J. Poisenski, USN, (BME, University of Louisville) has been a member of the Navy since enlisting in 1959. His enlisted service concluded with an academic scholarship, and subsequently a commission in 1966. He has since served as a rotary wing aviator in Vietnam, the Atlantic Fleet and the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. He holds two Distinguished Flying Crosses, A Bronze Star and twenty-eight Air Medals for his combat endeavors. He has commanded two helicopter squadrons, the last a Fleet Readiness Squadron. Captain Poisenski is a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, Class of 1975 and The National War College, Class of 1986.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	DISCLAIMER.....	11
	ABSTRACT.....	111
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	1v
1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.	PROFILES OF CONGRESS AND THE MILITARY.....	4
3.	FUTURE MILITARY COMPENSATION ISSUES.....	11
4.	LIKELY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION.....	15
5.	OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.....	22
	NOTES.....	26
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28
	INTERVIEWS.....	37

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

A topic has recently captured the imaginations of this nation. It has been the cause of a great deal of frustration. To a greater degree, it has shaped the attitudes and policies of governments on the international scene. This has been the impact of our national deficit. It's the focal point about which every agency within our government has acted and reacted in recent days, weeks and months.

Prior to the deficit becoming the main thrust of Congress, the national leaders concentrated their efforts upon the rejuvenation of our armed forces. This effort was drastically required, because the readiness of all branches had deteriorated after the cessation of U.S. action in Vietnam. The process of providing new weapons, larger fleets, greater logistic support, and increased operating budgets produced one of the most lucrative periods in military history, greater than any since the Second World War.

Almost simultaneously, the period of rebuilding the military ceased and the resolution of the nation transitioned to the elimination of the deficit. As enthusiasm and support for rebuilding waned there remained many seemingly simple issues

which still required attention. At issue and considered viable to each branch are future congressional trends and developments. One could argue for many programs, specific branches, action and inaction which, if grievously affected by congressional initiatives to drastically reduce appropriations, would spell the demise of the national defense. This paper's concern and focus is upon military compensation. How will Congress likely handle future military compensation issues?

This project will begin by looking at congressional members, their motivations, and their work environment. Next the military will be profiled in the same manner. This look at both of the major players will determine whether there is a convergent or divergent relationship. The study contends there is a divergent relationship. After this, the compensation issues which are considered crucial to the military will be discussed, and specifically address the effect on the All Voluntary Force(AVF). Next, these compensation issues will be considered in light of future trends within Congress. This study concludes that Congress is ready to act positively in response to constructive and frank initiatives by the Department of Defense. The paper additionally recommends the adaptation of an occupational model to determine future compensation solutions.

Research was conducted by using sources of literature and personal interviews. The interviews included members of Congress, their professional staffs, agents of the General



Accounting Office, and the military working on compensation issues. Each group was asked the same questions. Is the present military compensation package adequate? If there are shortfalls or overages, where are they? In general terms, what are the problems, who best controls the problems and has the approach been realistic? Will Congress respond to compensation issues favorably or unfavorably? Will the passage of the Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings bill affect the issue? Each responded to the latter that all bets were off if the bill passed and it would be months before they could accurately predict the outcome.

## Chapter 2

### PROFILES OF CONGRESS AND THE MILITARY

At first, the subject of military compensation and likely congressional trends appears less complex than reality. To best study this subject, it is imperative to compare military and congressional structures that handle the issue. The stunning contrast becomes evident as one views the profiles of Congress and the military. Congress as a body is unique. To most observers the essence of Congress is derived from its constituency. But when remotely assembled within the Capitol, the membership begins to demonstrate characteristics different than anticipated. First and foremost the membership remains a direct reflection of society. As the nation polarises on issues so does the Congress. Sometimes, congressional initiative seems affected by their quickness to voice their thoughts. But this could not be further from the truth because their thoughts stem from home and that background forms their responses and resultant actions.

A member of Congress may be perceived as an individual with three personalities. The first reflects a subservience to the

constituency. Next, is the role played as members of the distinct societies within the Houses of Congress. Last is that of the politician in general, away from the influence of the Hill and the constituency at home. Yet, even with this interaction of roles the final product of legislative action can be explicitly tied to the desire and opinions of society.

The foregoing keys us to the actions and reactions of the members, but what motivations or stimuli does the member perceive? There has been a decided shift, in style and substance, toward a more participative or democratic model of social organization. Insensitive administrators, obsolete structures, and encumbering procedures have been challenged in unprecedented ways. A resurgence of Congress has occurred to regain the power of the purse, to recapture war power, to take command of foreign policy, to strengthen oversight roles and

<sup>1</sup>  
congressional capacity. Perhaps the greatest reflection of the participatory resurgence has been the increased size and influence of lobbies upon Congress. As the chief of the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division at the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, Stanley Heginbotham

<sup>2</sup>  
has expressed the following view:

The following rules shape the behavior of members of Congress and their aides:

- Public-policy statements are keys to re-election prospects.

- Cultivate a reputation for independence among voters.
- Relations with foreign governments should be assessed in light of their importance to specific economic, strategic, political, and cultural interests of the United States and its constituent elements, whether those be regions, states, congressional districts, or interest groups.
- Opportunities to influence foreign policy will arise sporadically, resulting from unanticipated events, public concerns, the legislative calendar, and occasional oversight activities. These opportunities must be exploited.
- Since only sporadic influence on relations with other governments is possible, the goal must be to correct misguided policies of the past. In doing so, alienating those who are attached to the status quo and excessively reluctant to adjust to new realities will and should occur often.
- The ability to use delay, procedural maneuver, and surprise to the disadvantage of congressional adversaries in the ratification of foreign-policy agreements will improve leverage over them in legislative bargaining.
- Abilities as a quick-study generalist are essential to political survival and to legislative success.
- Policy preferences in the national interest must often be expressed in terms that appeal to the parochial concerns of the electorate.

Many more examples of conflicting diplomatic and legislative imperatives can be cited. The point is that these different sets of rules create problems when key actors do not recognize that they are playing in two arenas simultaneously or are unaware of the rules governing play in the other branch.

Perhaps the most pronounced trait of congressional behavior is cue taking. A thread pertaining to this ran through the rules previously stated and Randall Ripley also ascribes to its

importance:

Members of the House and Senate are called on to make a very large number of decisions each year. They must vote publicly hundreds of times on the floor. They must vote many more times on the floor by voice vote or in less visible ways. They must vote in committee and subcommittee. They must make a raft of other decisions in committee and subcommittee on which no formal vote is taken. They are basically asked to be familiar enough with everything the government does to make intelligent choices..... Obviously, no single individual can become even semi-expert in everything on the government agenda. Therefore, members seek shortcuts as they try to make up their minds. They seek cues for how to behave and how to vote on a great variety of policy matters. They want sources for those cues whose judgement they trust and who will lead them to "proper" decisions--that is, decisions that will help the senator or representative reach his own goals: whether they be reelection, ideological consistency, the "public good," personal status, or a combination of these goals.

The foregoing discussions are succinctly summarized by Table

2-1:

TABLE 2-1: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGRESSIONAL  
POLICY ACTORS

Characteristics	Senators and Representatives	Congressional staff members
Geographical representativeness	Broadly representative; overrepresentative of small towns	Broadly representative
Education	Highly educated	Highly educated
Occupation	Heavily in law and business; some educators; many prof. politicians	Specialty tied to job; many professional public servants; some generalists
Age	Median: late 40s	Median: 40
Sex and Race	Mostly white males	Mostly white males
Previous Government & political experience	Extensive experience in both areas	Limited experience but more political
Beliefs	Believes in subgovernments and interest group access; ideology shifts with election results	Believes in subgovernments and interest group access; ideology reflects that of their employer

Two facts remain concerning this study. First, less than sixty-five percent of congressional members have had military

experience.<sup>5</sup> Second, since 1978, Congress will have turned over seventy-percent of its membership by the end of the 1986

elections.<sup>6</sup> This fact reflects both the loss of contested seats and voluntary retirements and perhaps signifies a trend away from the era of the elder statesman. "In some segments of government the lack of military experience within Congress is frightening and representative of the country in general."<sup>7</sup> This is not a view subscribed to by this paper but mentioned as it is a current perception. If indications are correct, the percentage will

continue to decrease.<sup>8</sup>

What profile accurately portrays the present military? To what has the military force evolved? The era of a citizen army and garrison state have disappeared, along with the draft. This will remain the case until the draft is reinstituted. Several factors indicate a marked difference in military behavior. First, there has been a return to professionalism by the military, not so in the civilian quarter. Next, and most dominant, is the inception of the All Volunteer Force (AVF). This event, at it's inception, fostered the perception that the military was just another occupation in the market place. But this has not been the case and has resulted in a significant departure from society.

Profound differences can be shown in educational levels, racial  
content, the growing percentage of women, and marital status.  
There is concern this departure has obviated the responsibilities  
of citizenship for national service of some type. All attest to  
the fact that the present military force has diverged from the  
norm of society.

The profile best fits the enlisted force structure. It is not  
identical for all branches but each has similar problems causing  
divergence. The officer corp does not contain all the same  
elements which are found in the enlisted structure, but yet is  
divergent from society. The main differences concern perceptions  
of a sense of duty, dedication, loyalty and a total commitment to  
professionalism. Today's officer regards sacrifice as  
commonplace, much the same as the early settlers. Finally, the  
officer's trait of complete dedication or effort to protect and  
care for their men has all but disappeared from the U.S. work  
scene.

In brief summary, Congressmen are direct reflections of  
society. As such, congressional actions can be derived from  
society. The military, from the inception of the AVF, has  
diverged from society so that now a substantive gap exists. This  
gap and the pressing need to curb expenditures while maintaining  
a viable force presents a formidable problem.



## Chapter 3

### Future Military Compensation Issues

Military compensation is a very complex subject. It is a key factor in the well being of our military personnel and their fundamental acceptance of the military as a vocation. This chapter outlines the military compensation issues and the scope of the problem confronting Congress. It cannot provide an indepth analysis of military compensation and the respective problems. Instead it will conceptually view military compensation as either a reward for institutional services or for occupational services. The derived conclusions will show a perception equally divided between the branches and therein the dilemma confronting Congress. A spinoff of these conclusions will be an accent upon the critical and heightened importance of the issue today.

Prior to the decade of the seventies, military compensation was relatively low and fell in the bottom of national norms. A generous package of G.I. benefits clearly helped close the gap. This satisfied many service members, enough to meet force and strengths. The draft generated the required number of recruits, and even assisted those branches normally not dependent upon it.

This ceased with the abolishment of the draft. Congress astutely perceived the necessity for more adequate pay and early in the seventies provided generous compensation increases.

It was at the next juncture, the creation of the All Volunteer Force(AVF), that the military could be conceptually viewed as either an institution or an occupation. This distinction, and the adaptation of either one or the other concepts, decidedly<sup>12</sup> tailors the compensation packages of the military. It follows that these attributes ultimately shape the composition of the entire force.

A definition of the terms is required. The institutional concept creates a force centered upon values, a very strong sense of values. It establishes norms which are defined by lofty and readily accepted goals. The force becomes decidedly different from society. There is a perception that service is a calling to the military profession. The concept embodies an inability to resign, stemming from the sense of calling. Under this concept, military compensation is not monetary. The rewards come from being a member.

The occupational concept creates a force centered upon monetary compensation. It closely follows the laws of supply and demand. There exists a major requirement for strong contractual agreements which are explicit and clearly define obligation and responsibility. Monetary compensation loses its firm attachment

to rank and becomes disconnected. In a like manner, compensation follows the laws of supply and demand which generates payment on the shortage system: pay varies inversely with manning levels within different categories. Clearly, it is the pure economic model.

The cessation of the draft emphasized the above models and their application. Which way did the military go? Neither concept was purely adhered to and a haphazard blend resulted. This pay program shaped the force and the expectations of the membership. If the constituents of the branches were satisfied, retention problems and recruiting challenges would be minimal. This is not the case today. Charles Moskos expresses it as

13  
follows:

Since the end of the draft in 1973, the military services have been hard pressed to meet recruitment goals. Enlistment has fallen particularly short among those who will serve in ground combat arms and aboard warships. More than one in three service members do not complete their initial enlistments. With a growing number of skilled technicians leaving the military, retention of qualified people in the career force has become an acute problem.

Application of these concepts has been mixed but not with continuity. This distinction becomes important in regard to congressional perceptions. These perceptions shape compensation packages. Past vacillation between concepts by the branches of the military and the Department of Defense has delivered irrevocable confusion to congressional members and their staffs.

This confusion has generated frustration. This has grown and percolated to the extent that service members have suffered.

14

Again Mr. Moskos expresses it as follows:

Within the Defense Department there has been a failure to take the advice of those military leaders who were aware of the realities but unable to transmit a sense of them past the self-deceptions and the conceptual predispositions with which the proponents of the AVF had equipped themselves. Because the official evidence on the workings of the AVF was suspect, military manpower hearings on Capitol Hill became increasingly strained, if not antagonistic, when Congress questioned Pentagon spokesmen. A 1980 report of the House Armed Services Committee includes this telling statement: "Rather than attempting to reorient the recruiting process to attract people from broader segments of the civilian population and instead of exploring new alternatives to energize a faltering recruiting program, Defense officials appear to be expending their efforts to justify the continuation of past policies."

The members of Congress have had a trying task sorting out the compensation desires of the Department of Defense. This confusion has resulted from the vacillation over the mixed requirements and

15

desires of the individual branches. The consensus approach, sponsored by the Department of Defense to achieve better coexistence between branches, has stalled changes. It could mean the reinstatement of the draft or diminishment of force levels. The Gramm, Rudman and Hollings law emphasizes the importance of the issue. The Executive Department has fenced certain personnel issues but efforts to balance the budget could affect military compensation.

## Chapter 4

### LIKELY CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

The previous chapter briefly stated some implications of past defense compensation initiatives. These actions and the effect of the Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings law have presented the members of Congress with a dilemma when working future military compensation issues. This study argues there are two problem areas. First, Congress intends to maintain a strong defense. Second, the budget will be balanced in accordance with the Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings law. The argument concludes that Congress desires to do both and looks to the Department of Defense leadership for a viable means. It goes further to say that congressional action will rest solely with the advice tendered by congressional staffers and the Department of Defense.

Congress realizes the need to maintain a viable and capable military force. The force requires expenditures requested by the Executive Department which have been expressed in terms of a real growth factor of six percent. If there has been any reluctance toward the military it has been in the President's employment of military force, not the fact that it exists. This position has

drawn bipartisan support from both Houses of Congress. This has

17  
been expressed by Roger Davidson and Walter Dleszek as follows:

International crises usually imply the commitment of military forces. This calls into play the so-called "war powers," shared by the president and Congress. If the president takes forceful action, Congress typically gives initial support. Five presidents have recommended formal declaration of war; in all but one case, Congress went along enthusiastically, stating in the declaration that a state of war already existed.... More problematic are the 200 or so instances when U.S. military force has been deployed on foreign soil--including 8 major interventions since the end of World War II. (The number is uncertain because of quasi-engagements involving military or intelligence "advisers.") Most such actions were authorized by presidents on the pretext of protecting American lives or property abroad; some were justified on the grounds of treaty obligations or "inherent powers" derived from a broad reading of executive prerogatives..... Members of Congress tend to support such actions if they come to a swift, successful conclusion with a few lives lost. Actions that drag on, fail to resolve satisfactorily, or cost large numbers of lives will eventually tax lawmakers' patience. As the sense of crisis subsides, competing information appears which may challenge the president's version of the event. As the urgency passes, too, congressional critics are emboldened to voice reservations. This occurred during the undeclared wars in Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1965-1973) and the Lebanon peacekeeping mission (1983).

In another manner one may ascribe congressional support for a strong military by observing the interaction between the two segments of the government. The inference here is that reliance upon the military by the Congress is evidence of endorsement and thereby support. Morten Halperin expressed it this way:

18  
"The substantial influence of senior military officers has rested in part on the prestige and influence that military leaders have enjoyed in the

past with leading figures in the Congress. Many congressmen have defined the national interest in terms of what the military believe is necessary for national security."

So one may conclude a strong and viable military force is of  
19  
prime concern to the membership of Congress.

Next, how to wrestle with the Gramm, Rudman and Hollings law while ensuring adequate national security? This piece does not have the answer. It does argue that even with spending curtailments, Congress will still be open to the requirements of the military. This does not imply a free ride. It does place the burden of frankness and accountability squarely upon the  
20  
Department of Defense and the leadership therein.

There has been a great deal of dialogue lately concerning the Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings law. The commentary has ranged from the extreme that the law will solve our deficit problems completely to the counter point that portrays the law as the most

21  
careless and senseless piece of legislation in recent time . In fact the mix of concern and opinions extend to the members themselves: Senator Hatfield's remarks concerning the law, "It is no more of a panacea..... In fact, I would say it might even represent a greater danger at some point because it sounds so

22  
attractive." The consensus seems to be that budgetary excesses require belt tightening by all agencies in order to forestall

significant tax increases. Senator Domenici expressed just this

23

position recently:

".....I want to speak to the deficit..... Mr. President, first of all, spending is spending. For those who might speak around this country, or in the committees, or to members of their staff and say that defense spending does not create deficits but non-defense spending does, let me say that is not the case. There is no evidence that only one kind of spending or another causes deficits".

There exists one other problem which has close ties to the compensation deliberations. It involves the demographic factors at present in our society. The nation is experiencing it's

24

lowest birth rate since 1975. Further exasperating the situation, the lower end of society is having the greatest number of births, with the greatest increase in women thirty years or older. This causes concern as it may severely limit the number

25

and quality of military candidates. Will the military be able to attract the requisite numbers to meet force end strengths? Will there be enough advanced students for the leadership roles of the future force? Congress must face this issue, and may already have done so with the commencement, in 1980, of registration procedures for male citizens eighteen or older. Can one interpret this action as future restoration of the draft? It is difficult to decipher at this juncture but it remains a viable

26

option.



Another influence on congressional policy making is the existence of two separate chambers with two political parties in each. Neither is the mirror image of the other nor are the actions similar. Several differences between the two chambers powerfully influence their policy making biases: terms of office, size and character of constituencies, and size of the legislative

27  
body itself. Can the biases be considered consistent? Probably not. Some generalizations were possible when the configurations of constituencies home states were much simpler: like the era following the late forties. Today any such attempt would easily be discredited. Factually, the 1980's have witnessed the Republicans controlling the Senate and the Democrats retaining majorities in the House. The leadership of each has thereby differed in constituency, strategy and outlook. But even these distinctions have somehow failed to sustain the impact of

28  
bicameralism. Benjamin Page concludes over the long term that:

Bicameralism is less important in promoting or discouraging particular kinds of policy than in the furtherance of deliberation, the production of evidence, and the revealing of error. In recent years, commentators have been struck by the convergence of the two chambers: while House members spread their attention ever more widely and rely increasingly on their staff aides, senators pay more attention to reelection concerns.

This chapter has discussed the following congressional trends which, in varying degrees, interact with military compensation issues:

- Intentions to maintain a strong military posture.
  - \* Support rapid deployments in national interests.
  - \* Support real growth of military capabilities to achieve parity.
  - \* Control military excursions directed by the executive branch in order to minimize loss of life, equipment, and other costs.
- Intentions to achieve a balanced budget.
  - \* Control the deficit.
  - \* Control spending but support military.
- Solve demographic problems.
  - \* Reinstitute the draft or other national service as a last resort.
- Bicameralism.

The above demands a strong liaison between congressional elements and the military. Without effective cooperation, neither will be able to function. Congress will not develop a fawning relationship but through assertion of rightful powers will become a more complete partner in national security issues.

Further, there is a clear mandate to infuse all staffs with professionals, well versed and ready to interact without

29

developing adversary relationships. The degree of cooperation required does not imply that a blank check will be awaiting compensation problems. Instead, it details the responsibility and accountability to the Department of Defense for producing the critical issues without any padding whatsoever. If the leaders of Congress perceive the military is conforming to this then their best option would be to provide the military requests. It sounds simple because it is. Often times those served by bureaucracies are best served as the result of simplistic actions.

## Chapter 5

### OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This chapter concludes the paper. It begins by listing current compensation objectives. The following discussion recommends adoption of this study's occupational model for a military compensation standard. The study concedes certain issues do not have solutions and it so happens that these same items will affect military compensation.

The military compensation package in existence today has as its basis the institutional model defined in this study. This system works but contains two major points which could be serious enough to cause negative impacts upon force readiness. These shortcomings involve first, the small incremental difference between the salary of a new recruit and that of a senior petty officer(E-7) with twenty years service. Second, the system works well without conscription but if the demographic factors necessitate a return to the draft or the nation must mobilize through conscription, the careerist would realize that differential rewards for service do not exist. Before going further, this list depicts current military compensation

30

objectives appearing in military literature. Military compensation should:

- Be comparable to private sector pay;
- Be competitive with pay in other sectors;
- Provide an acceptable standard of living;
- Allow for management flexibility;
- Have a predictable adjustment mechanism;
- Be acceptable to military personnel;
- Support and preserve the hierarchical military structure;
- Be equitable;
- Minimize pay differentials among people of equal rank and service time;
- Be fully visible to service members and the public;
- Recognize differing working conditions; and
- Reward superior performance.

Earlier chapters discussed issues facing Congress which impact upon military compensation. One, considered a focal point, is the demographic factors. The services are going to find it

difficult, if not impossible, to attract the numbers and talent required to man the force at the turn of the century. To change that, this study contends military compensation must follow the earlier described occupational model. The military could then compete in the labor market and adhere to the laws of supply and demand. It also eliminates the problems of differential pay and provides the careerist the separation from accessions gained through the draft. Advocates of the institutional model will argue the occupational model is too theoretical in this application, and has not been tested under combat employment. On the other hand, the institutionalist contend their system has been tested and hold this question of war effectiveness to be the most critical. Surely this is an argument which will be costly to satisfy and hopefully the war will not be available to sort out the issue. The occupational model, besides proven analytical facts, provides a degree of stabilization which does not otherwise exist. The stability derives from the fact that any action affecting compensation, either positive or negative, will directly affect the readiness of the force. Theoretically this should eliminate imprudent actions dealing with compensation.

Last, the occupational model further eliminates another concern and that is the divergence of the military from the rest of society. By inclusion in the competition of the labor market, the military becomes a full participant with society. Conversely, remaining with the institutional model, the military

will continue to diverge and if compensation does not keep up with the market, those within the military could be looked upon as an underpaid mercenary force. At all costs this divergence must be arrested as it portends serious consequences for national security.

So in conclusion, this study has determined that the members of Congress rely upon senior military leadership to provide guidance with regard to compensation issues. These inputs sometimes carry more influence than congressional staffs. Further, Congress has an open mind concerning compensation issues and this attitude must be preserved through responsible actions on the part of Department of Defense personnel. Next, if the military is to remain viable and ready, a transition to the occupational model of compensation would best serve the nation. As a final comment, this paper was in draft form as the Gramm, Rudman and Hollings law was passed. The conclusions of the paper do not change with the new law. It should be noted that if certain factors are frozen, artificially not allowing supply and demand to work, then compensation increases would mandate force level reductions. This is very possible if the law stands. The law has been tested in the Federal District Court and a section has been found unconstitutional. This decision is being appealed and remains to be tested in the Supreme Court.

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